

QuickPoint! – Lincoln County’s Harmful Blame Game

By Micah Perry

In a recent November special election, Lincoln County approved a ballot measure that imposes restrictions and bans on short-term rental housing, such as vacation rentals and Airbnbs.

In some areas of unincorporated Lincoln County, existing short-term rentals will be phased out over the next five years, and permits for new rentals will no longer be issued. The measure also reduces the occupancy limits of short-term rentals countywide, among other restrictions.

Fundamentally, the measure represents an infringement on the property rights of landowners in the county, who can no longer provide a valuable service for visitors to the community. With fewer rentals available, fewer tourists will be able to visit the county and spend money at local businesses. This will undoubtedly harm the county’s economy.

Proponents of the measure say short term rentals have caused the county’s increasingly expensive housing costs, but this blame is misplaced. The county’s own land use restrictions have prohibited residential construction in huge portions of the county. In zones where housing can be constructed, multifamily residences are often not allowed.

Rather than turning on property owners, Lincoln County should open up more land for high-density residential construction. In the meantime, the county’s commissioners should immediately repeal the new measure’s restrictions before they do permanent harm to property owners and the local economy.

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